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Ministry of Education

FIRST AGREEMENT SIGNED FOR BURNABY ABORIGINAL SUCCESS

BURNABY – Aboriginal leaders and Burnaby school district representatives were joined today by Burquitlam MLA Harry Bloy, Burnaby North MLA Richard Lee and Burnaby-Willingdon MLA John Nuraney as the district's first Aboriginal education enhancement agreement to help improve Aboriginal student achievement was signed.

"The Burnaby school district has been hard at work improving the achievement levels for Aboriginal students," said Bloy. "Today's agreement will build on that hard work and improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in Burnaby."

Local Aboriginal communities, the Ministry of Education and the school district worked together to develop several strategies to help improve student achievement in this first agreement, including:

- All students in Burnaby schools will increase their knowledge and understanding of the history of Aboriginal people in Canada;
- Aboriginal students will develop a healthy lifestyle based on traditional Aboriginal teachings (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual);
- Increase the involvement of Aboriginal families, community and Elders; and
- The district will increase the number of Aboriginal administrators, teachers and support staff.

"It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. We are excited to see the inclusion of the Aboriginal community in the education of students," said Lee. "Everyone will benefit from this new agreement."

There are 870 Aboriginal students in the Burnaby school district this year. The district serves a high proportion of urban Aboriginal students.

"This agreement is important because it helps ensure Aboriginal communities have a voice in the education of their students," said Education Minister Shirley Bond. "Today's agreement will clearly set out how the district and Aboriginal communities will work together to see improved Aboriginal student achievement."

Thirty-seven B.C. school districts have signed Aboriginal education enhancement agreements to date. These agreements support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda to build new relationships with First Nations, and to close gaps in education and economic opportunities.

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"The purpose of this enhancement agreement is to ensure Aboriginal student success in school and in the world beyond," said Kathy Corrigan, chair of the Burnaby Board of Education. "We know that every student in Burnaby will benefit from the increased understanding and respect of Aboriginal peoples, their cultures and history."

"We are honoured to be able to pass on our knowledge to our students," said Ken Jasper, parent representative from the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee. "This new agreement will ensure our youth will be able to learn their culture in the classroom and open the minds of all students in Burnaby."

Many school districts have seen encouraging results following the signing of an education enhancement agreement. For example, in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows district, Grade 7 Aboriginal reading and writing results on the Foundation Skills Assessment improved by 20 per cent.

"All the partners deserve congratulations for this historic agreement," said Nuraney. "The future is bright for Aboriginal students in Burnaby."

Enhancement agreements are one component of the Province's strategy to improve Aboriginal student achievement. Others include the new First Nations education jurisdiction agreement and the development of Aboriginal content for K-12 curriculum.

The Province is investing an estimated $51.1 million a year – $1,014 per student – for Aboriginal education in 2008-09. The funds are used to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and other localized Aboriginal education programs.

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Media contact: Public Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Education
250 356-5963

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